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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Empire Justice Center and The Legal Aid Society Announce \$4 Million Grant from IOLA Fund to Launch First-of-its-Kind Statewide Civil Legal Services Training Center

(NEW YORK, NY) — **Empire Justice Center** and **The Legal Aid Society** today announced a landmark [\\$4 million grant](#) from the Interest on Lawyer Account (IOLA) Fund of the State of New York to build and launch a first-of-its-kind statewide Training Center dedicated to strengthening and expanding civil legal services across New York.

This unprecedented investment, part of the IOLA Fund’s Justice Infrastructure Project, will establish a new coordinated training hub designed exclusively for civil legal services providers. Over the next four years, the Training Center will develop and deliver high-quality, accessible training to attorneys, paralegals, advocates, and other professionals who serve New Yorkers facing eviction, domestic violence, consumer debt, immigration matters, barriers to public benefits, and among other civil legal crises, based on a comprehensive community needs assessment.

“The Statewide Training Center builds on Empire Justice Center’s origin and long history as a State Support Center for legal services providers outside New York City. Together with The Legal Aid Society we are poised to transform how civil legal services are delivered in New York State,” said **Kristin Brown, President & CEO at Empire Justice Center**. “By building shared curricula, expanding practical skills training, and creating modern systems for high-quality remote and in-person learning, we will equip legal services staff at every level with the tools they need to better serve clients.”

The Training Center development will be led by Empire Justice Center in partnership with The Legal Aid Society, creating a statewide footprint and combining decades of experience in training, litigation, and advocacy. The project will engage civil legal providers from all seven IOLA regions through surveys, advisory committees, regional trainings, and a new statewide faculty roster to ensure that programming is responsive, community-driven, and tailored to local needs.

“With this visionary support from the IOLA Fund, New York is charting a new standard in building the infrastructure our civil legal services community has long deserved,” said **Adriene Holder, Chief Attorney of the Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “This Training Center will expand the skill, reach, and impact of advocates in every corner of the state, and ensure that low-income New Yorkers receive the strong, life-changing advocacy they deserve.”

“The IOLA Fund is proud to support this groundbreaking initiative, which directly strengthens New York’s civil legal services infrastructure,” said **Christine Fecko, Executive Director of the IOLA Fund of the State of New York**. “By investing in a coordinated, statewide Training Center, we are investing in the advocates who stand on the front lines of justice every day and expanding their capacity to serve communities across the state.”

In its first year, the Training Center will create statewide infrastructure, conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, procure a learning-management system capable of hosting live and on-demand programming, and launch initial trainings. Over the full four-year grant cycle, the Center will host in-person trainings in every IOLA

region, manage a statewide New Hire Training Series, expand skills-based programs, and roll out a robust catalogue of on-demand content to meet the evolving needs of the field.

The result will be a stronger, more coordinated, efficient and more skilled civil legal services community — one better equipped to advance justice for the millions of New Yorkers who need legal help each year.

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Empire Justice Center is a nonprofit law firm that seeks to make the law work for all New Yorkers, especially those who need it the most. We do so by identifying critical issues, developing and implementing creative solutions and monitoring ongoing results. Our staff has protected and strengthened the legal rights of people in New York, especially historically marginalized communities for more than forty years. We do this through three major service areas. We teach the law by providing training, support and technical assistance to legal services and private attorneys and other community-based advocates to help them better serve their clients. We practice the law by providing direct civil legal assistance and undertaking impact litigation. And we improve the law by engaging in policy analysis, research and advocacy.

<https://empirejustice.org/>

The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit law firm that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For nearly 150 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of the people we serve and helps improve our communities.

www.legalaidnyc.org